

July 2020

McMaster's Workplace Wellbeing Newsletter focuses on the promotion of health, safety and wellness. Inquiries and feedback about any of the information in this newsletter may be sent to eohts@mcmaster.ca. This newsletter can also be provided in an accessible format upon request.

Workplace
Wellbeing
e-Newsletter



Environmental and Occupational Health Support Services (EOHSS)

A team of health, safety & risk management specialists committed to supporting the University's commitment to creativity, innovation and excellence, and strives to achieve these standards in the areas of environmental and occupational health, safety, loss prevention and mitigation.

Employee Health Support Services (EHS)

A team that provides programs & services to help employees lead healthier lives, in and out of the workplace. We are committed to supporting employees in a healthy & safe return to work following an injury or illness, facilitating workplace accommodations & fostering healthy work environments.

Organizational Development

A team that offers a supportive working environment through strong employee engagement, employee recognition & wellness. We also encourage individuals to enhance their personal and professional growth by recognizing that our employees and partners are our most valuable assets.

COVID-19

As we try to navigate safely through these uncertain times Health, Safety and Risk Management (EOHSS and EHS) have dedicated our **Workplace Wellbeing Newsletter** to COVID-19 in order to highlight some of the important documents and information that have been developed by our team to help assist the McMaster community.

Workplace Health and Safety Guidance During COVID-19

The Workplace Health and Safety Guidance During COVID-19 is intended to assist the McMaster community in the planning process for the gradual return to campus while managing the risk related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The goal is to provide ease of transition and assist supervisors in the management of risks for a safe and successful return to campus.

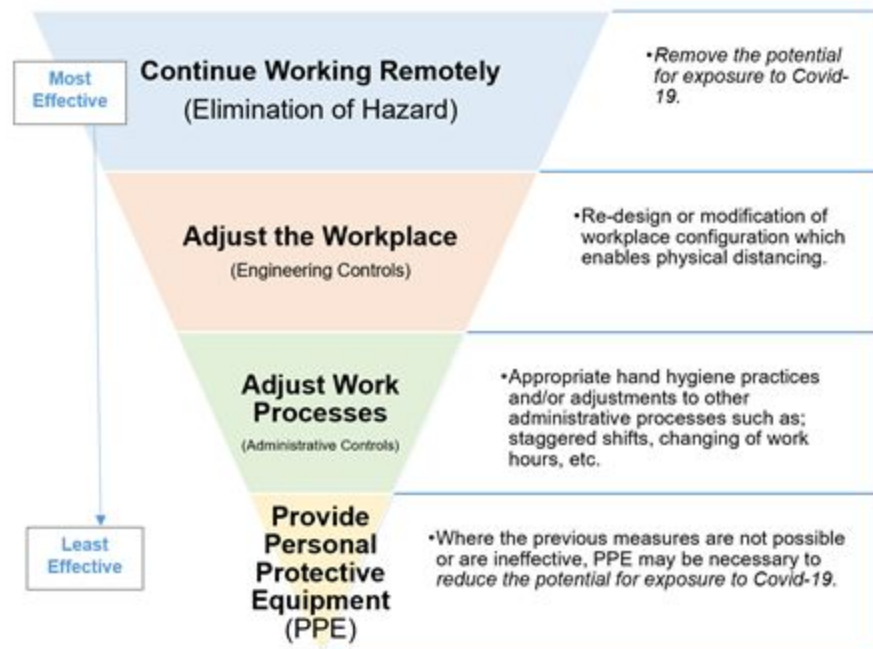
We recognize that the evolution of public health advice and government requirements will influence and restrict how the return to work will occur and workplace flexibility will continue to be required at this time. The guidance provided is, therefore, dynamic and will continue to be regularly reviewed and revised.

In accordance with Ontario's Occupational Health & Safety Act (OHSA), the University has the responsibility to keep a safe and well-maintained workplace and to take all reasonable precautions to protect workers from illness and/or injury by ensuring a work environment free from hazards. COVID-19 is a new hazard in the workplace requiring the University's careful planning and implementation of all reasonable precautions for the protection of workers.

To review **Workplace Health and Safety Guidance During COVID-19** click [here](#).

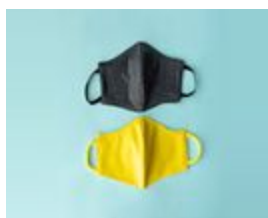
Understanding the Hierarchy of Controls

Hazard mitigation should always focus on implementing control measures to eliminate or reduce risk. For this purpose, the hierarchy of controls must be considered. This hierarchy can be applied to any hazard in the workplace including COVID-19. A brief overview of this concept is highlighted below.



Masks – Non-Medical, Surgical and N95 Masks

After the hierarchy of controls has been used and where previous measures are not possible or effective, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) may be necessary to protect against COVID-19. Understanding the differences between non-medical and medical masks is very important.



Non-Medical Masks/Face Coverings

It is important to know non-medical masks and face coverings are not personal protective equipment (PPE). Non-medical masks or face coverings are recommended in public spaces as source control where physical distancing may be difficult.

Face coverings/non-medical masks, like those made at home, are intended to limit the risk of the wearer exposing others to undetected illness or infection, including COVID-19. These masks are not regulated and are very different from medical surgical masks or N95 masks. Wearing face coverings does not eliminate the need for physical distancing practices or hand hygiene.

Masks for Work Where Physical Distancing is Not Possible



Surgical Masks

A surgical mask is a loose-fitting, disposable device that creates a physical barrier between the mouth and nose of the wearer and potential contaminants in the immediate environment. Surgical masks are regulated. If worn properly, a surgical mask is meant to help block large-particle droplets, splashes, sprays, or splatter that may contain germs (viruses and bacteria), keeping it from reaching your mouth and nose. Surgical masks are categorized accordingly, Level 1 - for low risk of fluid exposure, Level 2 - for moderate risk of fluid exposure, Level 3 - for high risk of fluid exposure.

Under certain circumstances due to the nature of the work or workplace where physical distancing 2m (6ft) is not possible, surgical masks will be provided by the supervisor in order to continue to work safely.

Medical masks (N95s) usage should be limited to healthcare workers only as there continues to be a global wide shortage.

For more information about masks and face coverings click [here](#).

Remote Work and Ergonomics

The number of employees working from home has increased greatly in the last few months in an effort to limit the spread of COVID-19. It is important that your home workstation is set-up so you can work comfortably taking ergonomics into consideration. The following suggestions will allow employees to continue to work productively and consider proper ergonomic set-up while at home.

- Define your workspace. Find a space or room in your home where there are limited distractions, and if possible, separate from other living areas and away from the television.

- Sit in a chair with a back. Avoid sitting on the couch as this will ultimately lead to neck and back strain.
- If you use a laptop, use a laptop riser and separate keyboard and mouse to ensure appropriate posture. You may even wish to consider setting your laptop on books or boxes as it should be at eye level.
- Try taking a break from your workstation at least once an hour to refresh your mind and body (ex. take a phone call while standing, get a cup of water, etc.). Don't forget to take micro breaks, these may last a few minutes or even seconds, by changing your position and using different muscles (ex. close your eyes for 30 seconds, flex and extend your hands, etc.).
- Practice stretching at your workstation. For ideas, refer to <https://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/ergonomics/office/stretching.html>.
- If you require a piece of equipment to do your job safely, please have a conversation with your supervisor.

For more information on remote work, click [here](#).

Workplace COVID-19 Supervisor Checklist

The Supervisor Checklist is offered to support supervisors in ensuring the health and safety of their employees during COVID-19. The completion of the checklist should be done prior to employees return to the physical workplace.

Workplace COVID-19 Employee/Researcher Checklist

Checklist to support employees and researchers in ensuring their health and safety during COVID-19. The checklist is to be done daily prior to your return to the physical workplace.

Self Assessment Tool

Ensure you have completed the Provincial Self Assessment tool referenced in the Workplace COVID-19 Employee/Researcher Checklist before coming to the University **each day**. The tool will assess if you are feeling unwell in any way, and next steps if you have travelled out of the country or come into close contact with someone who has symptoms of COVID-19. Employees entering MDCL/MUMC must complete the [McMaster FHS COVID-19 Screening Tool](#).

Workplace COVID-19 Lab Worker Checklist

The Lab Worker Checklist is provided to support lab employees in ensuring their health and safety during COVID-19.

Research Lab Use - Gradual Return to Campus

Now that reopening is well underway the University's research is slowly returning to campus. Working from home remains the preference but, as some research cannot possibly be done off campus, the University has planned for a gradual, phased return of on campus research.

Phase 1 does not signal a return of researchers for any reason other than to perform research that is impossible to perform in a remote manner. No individual will come to campus to take part in activities that include (but are not limited to) group or individual meetings, literature reviews, paper writing, grant preparations, thesis defenses, comprehensive exams, etc. Similarly, while trained undergraduates, graduate students and postdoctoral fellows will be permitted to work on campus as described in the document, “hands on” training of such individuals is not permitted.



Buildings that are now occupied have been equipped with COVID-19 safety messaging and wayfinding signage in public areas to assist occupants with their safe navigation throughout the buildings. If interested in ordering safety messaging and wayfinding signage for your space visit the [Media Production Services](#) website to place your order.

To assist researchers in their safe return to campus, guidance documents have been created. Click [here](#) to review. Additional information can also be found on the [McMaster COVID-19](#) webpage.

RMM 801 Still Required for Field Trips/Research Activity

Along with the approval received from your Chair and Associate Dean Research to continue research, [RMM 801 Field Trips, Student Placements and Research Activities Planning Approval Program](#) is still required. In accordance with the RMM EOHSS approval is required for Significant and Extreme risk activities. This includes all off campus activities that are part of McMaster's academic courses and programs that may involve an insurance risk, location risk, or a health risk.

Fire Doors - The Importance of Keeping them Closed

During these uncharted times, some may be tempted to prop open fire doors in an effort to introduce extra outside air into a work area or to avoid touching door handles. While we can see the logic in these actions at this time, propping fire doors open presents significant hazards and risks in the event of a fire. It is imperative that we not forfeit institutional elements of safety while working to address others. In this case, we need to balance the risk of coronavirus against other real hazards that have the potential to harm multiple people in a very short window of time, i.e. fire.



Fire doors and other opening protectives such as shutters and windows must be operable at all times. Operability of these systems includes opening, closing and latching. Fire doors must be kept closed and latched or arranged to be automatic closing during the time of a fire. In addition, **blocking or wedging of doors** in the open position is prohibited, as it violates the required operation and closing feature of the door.

While it may seem more “convenient” or in this case, a safer option from the perspective of spreading germs or increasing ventilation, interfering with fire door operation can have grave consequences during a fire. In addition, allowing fire doors to be held open runs a risk of this becoming an accepted practice in the building for any number of

situations. Building residents and staff should not get into a habit of overriding fire safe practices.

Anything that could prevent the door from closing and latching properly during an emergency condition such as propping the door open with objects, taping the latch, using wood wedges or kick-down door stops, or overriding the closing device, is a violation of fire safety standards. If they are to be effective, fire doors must be not only closed but also held closed. Building fires are capable of generating pressures sufficient to force fire doors open if they are not held closed with enough latching force, thereby rendering the doors incapable of protecting the opening in which they are installed and potentially allowing the fire to spread to an adjacent space and beyond the compartment of origin. Annual fire drills continue and will be completed before the end of the year.

Contact Kyle Wood, **Fire Safety and Emergency Management Specialist** with any questions or concerns at woodk12@mcmaster.ca.

COVID-19 - Workplace Guidelines

The following Workplace Guidelines are available on the [Human Resources Services website](#). This list of guidelines is not static and continues to expand and evolve so check the website regularly for updates.

[Guidelines for Research Lab Use During COVID-19 Pandemic](#)

[Guidelines for Travelling on Campus During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)

[Guidelines for Vehicle Use During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)

[Guidelines for Fieldwork During the COVID-19](#)

[Pandemic](https://hr.mcmaster.ca/resources/covid19/workplace-health-and-safety-guidance-during-covid-19/)<https://hr.mcmaster.ca/resources/covid19/workplace-health-and-safety-guidance-during-covid-19/>

[Guidelines for Assessing/Working in Shared Studio Spaces During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)

[Guidelines for Building Evacuations During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)

[Guidelines/Protocols for Face Coverings and Masks During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)

[Guidelines for Clinical Areas and Waiting Rooms During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)

[Guidelines for Client Facing Areas During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)

[Guidelines for Handling Mail and Packages During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)

[Guidelines for Retrieving Supplies/Equipment from Offices Spaces During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)

[Handwashing Poster](#)

COMING SOON Auto-Enroll Training

Auto-enroll for new employees of mandatory Health and Safety training along with AODA and Primer on Privacy training. This training will be ready for new employees to complete in Avenue to Learn, registering for these sessions first in Mosaic will no longer be required. More details to come.

COVID-19 Awareness Training

Training will soon be available in Mosaic for employees to complete related to COVID-19 information, including McMaster specific documents and measures.

Risk Management Manual Programs

The following RMM Programs have been updated and approved by Senior Management:

RMM 100 Workplace and Environmental Health and Safety Policy
RMM 111 Contracting Work Safety – Due Diligence Program

For a full listing of RMMs, please visit our [website](#).



For the latest safety tools, resources and updates, follow us on Twitter and find us on Facebook @McMasterSafety.



Strategies to Manage Your Stress and Well-Being

Stress is a common feeling that arises when demands are placed on us. It's part of the “fight or flight” response that prepares us to act quickly when faced with danger. Not all challenges today involve real danger, but our stress response can kick in when we face a variety of other life challenges.

Stress becomes a problem when we experience it for a prolonged amount of time, or when we can't recover from stress. Our bodies and brains were not designed to experience stress all the time. When our stress systems get overworked, our risk increases for experiencing various physical, emotional and mental health problems.

Some stress-related **symptoms** may include:

- ❖ feeling depressed, irritable, angry, anxious or overwhelmed
- ❖ fatigue
- ❖ lack of interest or motivation
- ❖ difficulty concentrating
- ❖ tension in the back and shoulders
- ❖ trouble sleeping

If you are experiencing some of the above symptoms, it may be a sign that stress is becoming a problem in your life. **Stress Strategies** offers the following action strategies for coping with stress.

1. Change the way you think: Emotion-focused coping strategies are used when you have little ability to control a situation and need to change the way you diffuse some of the stress. These can include:
 - ❖ [Maintaining a sense of humour](#)
 - ❖ [Cultivating optimism](#)
 - ❖ [Journaling about your emotions](#)
 - ❖ [Practicing meditation to increase self-compassion](#)
 - ❖ [Using visualization strategies to increase positive feelings](#)
2. Reach out for support: People who feel like they have the social support they need tend to have lower stress levels. The benefits of social support can be felt by those providing the support, too! No matter what is going on in your life, there are people who can help.
 - ❖ **Emotional support** – someone you can contact when you just need to talk or share your thoughts and feelings. It's important to know that you aren't dealing with everything on your own.
 - ❖ **Knowledgeable advice** – someone you talk to when you need more information, like how to access a service.
 - ❖ **New perspective** – someone you call when you need to look at a problem from a different point of view. Having multiple perspectives can be a powerful tool when approaching a solution to a problem.
 - ❖ **Practical help** – someone you can call for help with small tasks or chores when things feel overwhelming. For example: childcare, meal delivery, and/or workload.
3. Learn new healthy coping strategies: Effective stress management helps to break the hold stress has on your life in order for you to be happier, healthier, and more productive.
 - ❖ **Stress Strategies**, developed by the Psychology Foundation of Canada, offers a free problem-solving tool for stress management.
 - ❖ **Homewood Health Stress Solutions**, is a **NEW** free telephone service for McMaster employees and their family members which provides coaching for one-on-one stress management, lifestyle, priority management and tools such as meditation and relaxation techniques. **Call 1-800-663-1142 to get started.**
4. Make lifestyle changes: A healthy lifestyle helps us maintain a level of physical and mental health that maximizes our ability to tolerate and recover from stress. Some examples include:
 - ❖ [Leaving stress behind at bedtime](#)
 - ❖ [Benefitting from physical activity](#)

- ❖ [Letting food be thy medicine](#)
- ❖ [Avoiding alcohol to reduce risk of harm](#)
- ❖ [Building a support network](#)

5. Seek professional help: If stress is overwhelming or interfering with the ability to solve small problems, it may be helpful to seek professional help.

- ❖ [Homewood Health](#)
- ❖ [Wellness Together Canada](#)

References: <https://www.stressstrategies.ca> and <https://cmha.ca/>

Psychological Well-Being During COVID-19

Whether you are working on site or remotely, this is a stressful time for most of us and it's normal to feel more anxious than usual. This is an important time to prioritize your psychological well-being in order to cope with your personal and professional demands, and the uncertainty of the situation. A number of employee [resources](#) are provided that you may find helpful during this time.

Need Help?

[Employee and Family Assistance Program \(EFAP\) - Homewood Health](#): If your stress is overwhelming, please reach out to your health care provider, or Homewood Health for support. Homewood Health continues to offer its telephonic counselling services **1.800.663.1142**

Learn more about upcoming sessions and register on our [HR Events page](#).